

SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Robert Walker, Executive Director - Place

To: Cabinet - Tuesday, 29 October 2019
Council - Wednesday, 27 November 2019

Author: Greg Pearson, Emily Spicer, Place Manager

Subject Holbeach and Spalding Town Improvement Works

Purpose: To outline the proposed three-year plan of improvements for Holbeach and Spalding that can be delivered to enhance the town centres and provide future opportunities.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That members consider and agree the Town Centre Improvement Plan as outlined in Appendix 3
- 2) That works associated with the Improvement Plan are funded from the Growth and Investment reserve up to a value of £500,000 investment over 3 years
- 3) That a 3 year fixed term post is added to the establishment to co-ordinate and undertake works as part of the Town Centre Improvement plan
- 4) That the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of Cabinet, be given delegated authority to commit resources up to the value of £500,000 to deliver the agreed Improvement Plan
- 5) That the Town Centre Steering Group for Spalding be established to act as a consultative body to gather community and business input
- 6) That members agree the suggested governance arrangements for the Holbeach Future High Street Fund business case development and that these be used to deliver proposed actions set out for Holbeach in the proposed Town Centre Improvement Plan
- 7) That members agree to accept the sum of £150,000 granted from the Future High Street Fund for the purposes outlined in paragraph 1.15.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The towns of South Holland particularly Holbeach and Spalding are important community hubs for our residents, offering a destination for retail, leisure experiences and social interactions. As such it is important to ensure that they remain vibrant and attractive places that people want to live, work and visit.
- 1.2 Traditionally town centres have been viewed as a retail destination for residents, however with the increase of online shopping trends this model is no longer sustainable and many

high streets are coming under increasing pressure, leading to many retailers no longer wanting or being able to afford a presence. This has led to many high streets becoming unattractive destinations to visit or spend money.

- 1.3 Nationally it has been recognised, through a number of key appraisals that the structure of the high street offer needs to change to bring residents back to them; potentially meaning a shift to a more mixed retail, leisure and housing offer than what is currently present. Both the second Grimsey Review (Appendix 1) and the LGA Revitalising Town Centre handbook (Appendix 2) are held in high regard for identifying practical and realistic opportunities to improve outcomes for town centres.
- 1.4 The main findings of these reviews are: -
 - The introduction of high quality housing is increasingly important to integrate residential uses that diversify the local housing offer but also extend the hours of activity throughout the day and evening within town centres
 - Towns need to become gathering points for the whole community by offering a great experience facilitated by technology and incorporating health, entertainment, housing, education, leisure, business and retail
 - The offer needs to build on local heritage of why people want to live, work and enjoy time in the area to build a sense of place
 - A joined-up approach to transport, accessibility, parking and movement is important to create a welcoming arrival experience for all
 - Recognition of the need to re-calibrate the town centre influenced by technological revolutions
- 1.5 The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 also sets out the Council's support of this agenda by stating that "Spalding town centre will continue to be the primary destination for retail, entertainment, markets and events while their rich environmental qualities can be promoted, enhanced and appreciated".
- 1.6 **Programme of Improvement Works**
- 1.7 The town centre landscape has irrevocably changed over the last decade. Understanding the community's current and future needs, local authorities are best positioned to transform the town centre into a complete community hub incorporating health, housing, arts, education, entertainment, leisure, business/office space, as well as some shops, while developing a unique selling proposition (USP).
- 1.8 The key to success is outstanding, talented and committed leadership. With a wealth of strong relationships with key stakeholders (from health providers to local businesses), local authorities are best placed to bring people together and then develop and implement a plan for the location, focused on its distinct heritage.
- 1.9 Appendix 3 sets out a three-year Town Centre Improvement Plan for Holbeach and Spalding. Utilising the evidence gathered through the Grimsey Review, the LGA Revitalising Town Centre handbook and feedback from Members, stakeholders and communities it is proposed that this plan can be delivered to enhance the town centres. The plan brings together a series of activity including quick wins to establish a 'track record', foundation building (getting the fundamentals right) and data harvesting to

establish a baseline of evidence that will enable the towns to be fleet of foot when funding opportunities similar to the Future High Street Fund arise. Throughout the delivery of the three-year plan, further engagement will take place to ensure each activity meets the outcomes as outlined in Appendix 3.

1.10 All of the improvements listed can be delivered within three years however it is anticipated that through the course of the plan, further activity and projects may be identified subject to funding and resources.

1.11 The activities have been set under the following areas of activity which were identified as priorities for improvement in the Government's recent Grimsey Review: -

- **Town Centre Living**– Local planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for these areas, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. A wide range of complementary uses can, if suitably located, help to support the vitality of town centres, including residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure/entertainment, healthcare and educational development.
- **Travel and Accessibility** – Better access for visitors to the town centres is required with sustainable and attractive routes where possible. As the towns grow pedestrian and cycle routes need to lead from new developments to the town, connecting to areas of leisure opportunities on route.
- **Reconnecting Leisure and Culture** – Evidence suggests that more and more people visit towns to access leisure and culture offerings. By reconnecting leisure and culture provision a unique selling proposition will help promote the history and heritage of the towns whilst establishing a modern friendly welcomed offer for both new and old residents.
- **Streetscape and Public Realm** – A number of streetscape initiatives will have a big impact on the overall ambiance and aesthetics of a place. These improvements will encourage a sustainable street culture, boost the evening economy and enhance the town's prominence as the social and commercial centre.
- **Digital High Street** – It is important to connect residents to the high street in the ways that they want, when they want. While there will always be a place for the traditional retail model the demand for this is shrinking and consumers are expressing that they wish to interact with our town centres in a digital way. It is therefore vitally important to secure the longevity of both towns by enabling this.

1.12 **Current situation**

1.13 The Council is currently undertaking a number of other activities that will contribute to this agenda and its desired outcomes. In order not to make proposals for this piece of work unwieldy and overly complex they have not been included in the attached Town Centre Improvement Plan (Appendix 3). It is however, pertinent to make members aware that there will be a number of interdependencies with the following work streams going on elsewhere within the council, these are: -

- Development of the Future High Streets Fund Business Case in Holbeach
- Development of the Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) at Holbeach
- Implementation and delivery against the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan
- Development of the current and future leisure centre provision in Spalding

- The work carried out by the 'Pride in South Holland' programme
- Improvements to the South Holland Centre
- The Spalding Western Relief Road (SWRR)

1.14 **Future High Streets Fund - Holbeach**

1.15 Members will be aware that in August of this year the council successfully submitted an expression of interest to the Future High Streets Fund and has been awarded £150,000 to develop a detailed business case to be submitted to Government by June 30th 2020. This funding will be used to provide resource and technical surveys to develop a robust evidence base. The business case will be seeking to secure capital funding in the region of £5-10 million to make significant improvements to the high street in Holbeach by reducing the dominance of the traffic in the town centre. It is expected that we will be notified about whether we are successful in later 2020.

1.16 It is proposed that two tier governance structure is explored to oversee the delivery of the next phase of the project; a strategic board and an operational board. This governance structure will link into the emerging Programme of town improvement works for Holbeach being developed. The involvement of Lincolnshire County Council in the project is considered essential, on the basis that officers from Lincolnshire County Council's Highways, Economic Development and Heritage teams supported the development of the Expression of Interest.

1.17 The strategic board will be responsible for setting the strategic direction of the project and ensuring that the delivery elements are held to account on project goals and timescales. It is proposed that the membership of the strategic board is: -

- SHDC Political representation
- LCC Political representation
- Senior SHDC Officer (CEO/Director level)
- Senior LCC Officer
- Parish Council representation
- GL LEP representation
- University of Lincoln representation
- Local business representation
- Health / CCG representation
- Third sector representation

1.18 The operational board will oversee the granular detail of the delivery elements of the project and be answerable to the Strategic Board. It is proposed that the membership of the operational board is: -

- Project Officer
- SHDC Representatives to include Planning, Place manager, Economic Development
- LCC Representatives (likely Economic Development and Heritage teams)
- LCC Highways Representative
- MHCLG Delivery Manager

1.19 The Town Centre Improvement Plan and the Future High Streets Business Case are intrinsically linked and it is anticipated that they will run concurrently. In order to prevent

duplication, it is proposed that there will be one set of governance arrangements for both programmes of activity in Holbeach. Progress around deliver of actions relating to Holbeach in the Town Centre Improvement Plan will be tracked through these boards.

1.20 **Town Improvement Project Group**

1.21 In order to deliver an efficient Town Centre Improvement Plan, it is proposed that to enable it to move forward at pace an internal steering group is established, known as the Town Improvement Project Group. This group will be responsible for driving the programme of work and allocation of resources relating to the Improvement Plan. In addition, it will link into and oversee any of the Council's activities in relation to Holbeach being generated by the Future High Street Fund Strategic and Operational boards as set out in paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18. It is proposed that the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of Cabinet, is given delegated authority to complete any associated actions by mechanism through this group including the ability to commit expenditure up to the value of £500,000 investment.

1.22 It is proposed that the core membership of this group consists of the below: -

- Deputy Leader of the Council
- Deputy Leader of the Cabinet
- Executive Director of Place
- South Holland Place Manager
- Executive Manager – Growth
- Senior Policy Advisor
- Any other appropriate subject matter experts and partners as deemed necessary

1.23 **Town Centre Steering Group - Spalding**

1.24 The key to successful delivery of any Town Centre Improvement Plan is committed leadership to enable activity to be focused and full stakeholder engagement of the whole community. To ensure that this is fundamentally built into the plan for Spalding it is proposed that a Town Centre Steering Groups is established. This will be purposed with ensuring that all key stakeholders are fully engaged and that their views will help shape and develop the plan throughout its three-year life time.

1.25 It is not envisaged that this will be a decision making body. It will be developed with full terms of reference to act as a body to consult and test community support for proposed actions. It is proposed that group will be chaired by the Deputy Leader of Cabinet.

1.26 It is proposed that membership of the town centre steering group will consist of community and business representatives who can help inform the various elements of the projects as they develop. It is envisaged that over time the membership will flex and change to meet the developing programme of activity.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 Agree the proposal as set out above to establish **(recommended)**: -

- In the Town Centre Improvement Plan as outlined in Appendix 3
- That activities associated with the Improvement Plan are funded from the Growth and Investment reserve up to the sum of £500,000 investment over 3 years
- A fixed term post is added to the establishment for 3 years to co-ordinate and undertake works as part of the Town Centre Improvement Plan
- Delegations that enable the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of Cabinet, to commit resources up to the value of £500,000 to deliver the agreed Improvement Plan
- That an internal Town Centre Improvement Project Group is established
- That a Town Centre Steering Group is established for Spalding as a mechanism to engage external stakeholders
- That members agree the suggested governance arrangements for the Holbeach Future High Street Fund business case development and that these be used to deliver proposed actions set out for Holbeach in the proposed Town Centre Improvement Plan
- That members agree to accept the sum of £150,000 granted from the Future High Street Fund for the purposes outlined in paragraph 1.15

2.2 Do nothing.

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 Both the towns of Holbeach and Spalding are facing significant challenges particularly around the viability of their high streets. It is fundamental to the growth and prosperity of both towns and the wider population of South Holland that actions are taken to secure the future of them both.
- 3.2 As previously stated, the Town Centre Improvement Plan brings together a series of activity including quick wins to establish a 'track record', foundation building (getting the fundamentals right) and data harvesting to establish a baseline of evidence. This provides a robust position to move forward each year, building on successes or changing direction for further outcomes.
- 3.3 The success of Holbeach in moving forward to the next stage of the Future High Streets Fund provides further opportunity to develop plans. The delivery of a number of the actions outlined in this report and Appendix 3 will demonstrate the commitment of South Holland to improving the town centres and therefore be fundamental to securing a successful bid for capital funding.
- 3.4 Both towns are scheduled to take a significant amount of housing and infrastructure growth in the future. The Improvement Plan allows further residential opportunities to be identified and plans developed that are effective place shapers of the town centres. As part of this growth we need to ensure that the towns are fit for purpose and meet the needs of these additional communities and that they are able to connect into the towns easily at all times of the day.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

- 4.1 Significant benefits will be delivered to both towns. These include (but are not exhaustive):

- Strong identities for the towns clearly defined
- Two strong towns benefiting the whole district
- Improvement in aesthetics to the public realm
- Increased footfall, repeat visits and increased loyalty
- Protection and enhancement of local heritage and the environment
- Increased economic viability
- Increased inward investment into the towns
- Improved perception of safety
- Support to flexible workspaces and work patterns
- Key performance indicators set up to support funding opportunities or future improvements

Further outputs and outcomes of activity within the Town Centre Improvement Plan may be viewed in Appendix 3.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

- 5.1.1 Activities to improve the streetscape and public realm are detailed within the Town Centre Improvement Plans and Pride in South Holland Programme. Evidence suggests that clean and well maintained areas detract from littering, with a sense of pride instilled and improved environment.
- 5.1.2 It is anticipated that by encouraging greater use of more sustainable transport such as walking and cycling and improving accessibility there will be an impact on air quality in both the towns.

5.2 Corporate Priorities

- 5.2.1 The Council has already made a number of commitments to its residents that support this agenda through its corporate policies and plans. In its corporate plan it has identified the following priority which focuses on improving its towns with a particular focus on Holbeach and Spalding; ***Support the expansion and growth of Spalding and Holbeach to be attractive places where people want to visit, live and work whilst supporting all other towns and villages in the district to meet the needs of their Communities.***

5.3 Crime and Disorder

- 5.3.1 Creating a vibrant town through activities within the Town Centre Improvement Plan, will contribute to improved perceptions of safety and crime in both towns. Making residents feel safer and more willing to visit both places.

5.4 Financial

- 5.4.1 The Council will need to commit funding from the Growth and Investment reserve to deliver a number of the activities within the Town Centre Improvement Plan, principally those that

are short term 'quick wins' to provide confidence in delivery. These have been grouped into phase 1 activities (highlighted green) within Appendix 3.

5.4.2 The key areas of spend proposed for phase 1 are:

- Refurbishment of identified public toilets (Sheep Market, Spalding and Market Hill, Holbeach)
- Provision of an extensive events programme for both towns
- Review and reshape the existing markets provision
- Improvements to street furniture and the public realm
- Improved digital offer with the town centre (free Wi-Fi (Spalding only), web presence, strong social media interaction)

5.4.3 Further detail can be found in Appendix 3 with additional activities being added to the plan as appropriate by delegated authority to the Executive Director – Place in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Deputy Leader of Cabinet up to the sum of £500,000 investment over 3 years from the Growth and Investment reserve.

5.4.4 Clear links to the development of the Future High Streets Fund Business Case in Holbeach, which is seeking to secure capital funding from the government, will be made.

5.4.5 In addition an ambitious and comprehensive level of works have been committed to through other projects for example SWRR, developments to current leisure provision and future options and FEZ.

5.4.6 By undertaking activities detailed within this report and appendices, both towns are best placed to secure external funding opportunities as they arise in the future.

5.5 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.5.1 One of the 5 work streams for the Town Centre Improvement Plan is reconnecting leisure and culture. A number of activities within the plan positively impact on the health and wellbeing of residents by encouraging active participation in a number of ways such as improving accessibility, increasing activities within Ayscoughfee Gardens and provision of an inclusive events programme and promotion of an arts/heritage trail.

5.5.2 As previously detailed, the Town Centre Improvement Plan will link closely with other strategic projects such as improvements to the Castle Sports Complex operational improvements and future options to increase the offer for residents, visitors and businesses with the towns.

5.6 **Staffing**

5.6.1 Whilst the improvement plan brings together a number of work streams that are already resourced as part of the Corporate Plan (2019-21), a three-year fixed term 'Market Towns Co-ordinator' post will be essential in order to maintain focus, pace and responsibility of key activities. It is anticipated that the duties of this post would position at a Grade F (£24,657-£28,221) subject to job evaluation. It is anticipated that this post would have a key role in engaging partners to implement the plan and would work closely with the External Funding officer to help identify all possible funding opportunities. This post would report directly into the Place Manager whilst working closely with the Future High Street Fund Project Officer.

It is proposed that this position would also act as a support officer to the Project Officer for the Holbeach Future High Street Fund Business Case creating further synergies and alignment of the two pieces of work.

5.7 Reputation

- 5.7.1 There will be significant reputation benefits by delivering the improvement plan in a way that engages the whole community (residents, visitors and business) and that they see the improvements as positive outcomes for South Holland.
- 5.7.2 Each activity within the Improvement Plan provides potential positive reputational impact to the council. Where we are able to continue to deliver good operational services, improve aesthetics and a sense of place whilst re-establishing the towns as community hubs, this can only be a positive for residents, visitors and businesses.

5.8 Stakeholders / Constitution / Timescales

- 5.8.1 The establishment of the Spalding Town Centre Steering group and the governance arrangements for the Holbeach Future High Streets Fund will ensure full stakeholder engagement in the Improvement Plan and ensure that success outcomes are delivered for both places (as detailed in Appendix 3). The terms of References of these groups will clearly set out who the key stakeholders are and how they will be engaged.
- 5.8.2 The Town Centre Improvement Plan covers 3 years of activity with the ability to flex this plan with emerging opportunities and projects.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

While specific wards in the towns of Holbeach and Spalding will be directly affected it is envisaged due to their nature as service centres/ community hubs for the whole of South Holland all residents will be positively impacted by the proposed improvement plan.

7.0 ACRONYMS

LGA – Local Government Association
FEZ – Food Enterprise Zone
SWRR – Spalding Western Relief Road
FHST – Future High Street Fund

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Key Decision: N

Exempt Decision: N

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 - The second Grimsey Review

Appendix 2 - The LGA Revitalising Town Centre handbook

Appendix 3 – The Town Centre Improvement Plan (3 year)